

Tax Agent Admits Ordering Wiretaps; IRS Here Is Blamed for Snooping

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Federal tax agent George L. Wilson, who believes in fighting "fire with fire" where racketeers are concerned, acknowledged yesterday that he ordered wiretaps on three occasions.

Wilson, who is group supervisor of the Internal Revenue Service Intelligence in Boston, testified before the Senate Subcommittee investigating Federal wiretapping and other snooping techniques.

He told the committee that he ordered James J. O'Neill, a Boston agent in 1962, to tap a Lynn, Mass., warehouse suspected of being a center of bookmaking activities.

With the exception of two cases involving other Federal agencies since then, he said, he has not ordered any wiretaps. Wilson said he was instructed by U.S. Attorney W. Arthur Garrity Jr. of Boston in 1962 not to use eavesdropping devices.

"Garrity feels very strongly about the matter," Wilson said. "He is firm in his conviction that technical instruments are not necessary."

Wilson said Garrity feels an agent's testimony is sufficient evidence in court.

The Boston IRS office devotes 30 per cent of its manpower to fighting organized crime, Wilson said, which he feels is "way ahead of us" in uses of electronic listening equipment.

In ending the three days of hearings, Sen. Edward V. Long, D-Mo., said Federal Treasury officials in Washington are to blame for wiretapping activities in Boston since they condoned them, supplied the equipment and operated a special snooping and lock-picking school.

Wilson also denied testimony by earlier witnesses that Boston agents harassed taxpayers.

Cohen on Wiretapping

As a longtime admirer of *The Washington Post* I was a little distressed to see your editorial in today's paper "Contempt for Law" state that I find some "extenuation or justification" for wiretapping and similar activities. I think my position is absolutely clear as stated before the Committee yesterday. At that time I stated:

"First, I think that my actions since I have become Commissioner and my testimony here amply demonstrate that I have no patience with—and I will not tolerate the invasion of rights of individuals by any agents under my jurisdiction. I believe this profoundly—and I will carry it forward with all the strength and dedication I have—whether the individual concerned is a businessman, a housewife, a racketeer, or a criminal. We do not have one set of laws relating to wire tapping and bugging for people who are criminals and another for businessmen and other citizens. I will not tolerate wire tapping or bugging by our people! If it occurs, the persons involved will be summarily disciplined."

Under the circumstances I think your editorial may be a little misleading as to my position.

SHELDON S. COHEN,
Commissioner, Bureau of Internal Revenue,
Washington.